



# EXECUTIVE REGULATION

## MONTGOMERY COUNTY FIRE AND RESCUE COMMISSION

No. 24-08

EFFECTIVE DATE:

4 / 15 / 2000

TITLE

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES FOR HELICOPTER LANDINGS

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### MONTGOMERY COUNTY FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE POLICY

#### STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES FOR HELICOPTER LANDINGS

Issued by Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Commission

Authority: Montgomery County Code Section 21-2. (d)(2)

Policy No. 24-08

Effective: April 15, 2000

- SUMMARY:** This policy establishes guidelines for Montgomery County fire and rescue service personnel when responding to emergency incidents requiring site selection and assistance at helicopter landings.
- DEADLINES:** Montgomery County Fire Board Comment: August 30, 1999  
Local Fire and Rescue Departments Comment: August 30, 1999  
Division of Fire and Rescue Services Comment: August 30, 1999
- ADDRESS:** Send all comments pertaining to the proposed policy to Beth Feldman, 12<sup>th</sup> Floor, 101 Monroe Street, Rockville, Maryland 20850
- STAFF:** For additional information, you may contact Beth Feldman, Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service, at (777) 240-2423.
- BACKGROUND:** Fire and rescue units (usually an engine company comprising three personnel) are dispatched for helicopter landings to identify a safe landing area, maintain security for the aircraft, and assist the flight crew as requested. This policy provides guidelines to enhance personnel and operational safety when fire, rescue, and emergency medical services personnel assist at helicopter landings.



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Sec. 1. **Purpose:** To ensure that all Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service personnel use safe, efficient, and effective operational procedures while assisting aircraft personnel at any helicopter landings.

### Sec. 2. **Definitions.**

- a. **Landing zone (LZ).** A ground area selected by personnel to provide a safe, unobstructed landing site, as close to the incident as possible, for a helicopter landing.
- b. **Personnel.** Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service firefighter, rescuer, and emergency medical services providers.

Sec. 3. **Applicability.** These procedures apply to all Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service personnel.

Sec. 4. **Policy.** It is the policy of the Fire and Rescue Commission to establish standard operational procedures to ensure the safety of **personnel** and the general public, and to enhance the efficient and effective mitigation of incidents involving helicopter landings.

### Sec. 5. **Procedures.**

1. **Landing Zone Selection Criteria.** Fire and rescue service **personnel** will identify a safe potential **landing zone**, but the helicopter pilot and flight crew may decline that location and make a final determination of an alternate site.
  - a. The **landing zone** should be an area at least 100 feet X 100 feet, with no potential airborne debris. **Personnel** should walk over the landing site to check for holes, hazards, and debris. The ground contact unit officer must ensure that the helicopter's approach is clear of trees, power lines, sign posts or other obstructions, and must inform the pilot of any obstacles.
  - b. A paved surface is preferred if there is no potential airborne debris, but if the ground is firm enough to support the ambulance it should also be capable of supporting the helicopter.



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- c. Designate the **landing zone** as close to the incident scene as possible to expedite the transition from field care to the helicopter. If the helicopter cannot land close to the scene and extrication or treatment will be prolonged, attempt to transport the flight medic to the scene.
  - d. **Personnel** should communicate verbally with the pilot regarding the **landing zone**. They should not use flares or emergency lights for this purpose.
2. Site Identification Marking. Identify the perimeter of the **landing zone** with unit emergency lights. When the pilot has confirmed the **landing zone**, turn off all emergency and warning lights that could cause vision problems for the pilot.
3. Landing Zone Scene Security. A minimum of three **personnel** must secure the area around the **landing zone** to restrict pedestrian and other traffic.
4. Personnel Safety.
  - a. **Personnel** must wear full protective clothing, including eye and hearing protection. They must tighten helmet chinstraps securely and avoid wearing any gear that can be dislodged and drawn into the rotors or engines.
  - b. **Personnel** may approach the helicopter only when requested by its crew, and then only from the front. They must never approach from the rear and must remain clear of the tail rotor at all times.
5. Potential Fire Extinguishment. Units are not required to deploy supply or attack hose lines or carry small portable fire extinguishers to the **landing zone**.



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Sec. 6. **Effective Date.** This policy is effective on April 15, 2000.

Attest:

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Gordon A. Aoyagi, Chair  
Fire and Rescue Commission

April 15, 2000  
Date

helicopter policy final BF 3/20/00